

Hovey (E.)

An Address:

TO THE MEMBERS OF "THE SOUTHWEST DENTAL SOCIETY," AT
THEIR SECOND ANNUAL MEETING, AT COLUMBUS,
KANSAS, AUGUST 9TH, 1881,

By E. HOVEY, President.

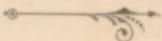


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ORDERED THAT FIVE HUNDRED COPIES BE PRINTED FOR THE
USE OF MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY.



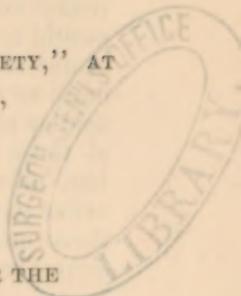
Once more we meet and once again we have grasped each other by the hand, and looked into the frank and genial eye repeating our experiences of one year ago, when we met at Carthage, Mo., to organize this our cherished society, for the purpose of fostering fraternal feeling, and professional regard amongst ourselves, and to become acquainted with the most approved methods in the practice of our profession.

It affords me great pleasure in being able to report an improved condition of our Dental ethics and professional deportment so far as my observation and information extends, and the desire and determination for improvement and general progress, is a marked feature among our members, and must be noticeable by our patients and patrons as well as all others of observation.

There is probably no one thing in connection with our profession, which contributes so much towards our improvement therein, as a healthy condition of our Dental Ethics.

Whilst this remark is not intended to disparage other requisites, as attention to business, reading and studying our dental literature, attending and graduating at our dental colleges, aiming at and striving for the highest excellence in our chosen profession, for each and all of these steps may be regarded as a *sine qua non* to such excellence, yet, I repeat it no one of these things can equal this prime factor of progress, a healthy condition of our Dental Ethics.

It will be understood that I speak of our profession as it now exists; comprising as it does, many able and creditable practitioners who have not taken all of the most approved steps now available, for a dental education and such as we would all now encourage and recommend for the younger members and the new



beginners in our profession, but who, nevertheless, have acquired a good general knowledge of dentistry in nearly all of its branches, and some local distinction as good, reliable and faithful practitioners; many more, likewise, who have the elements of, and a desire for such improvement as they have learned to appreciate, and such as their more experienced brethren perceive in sadness they really need, all these and other classes it were more possible than politic to mention, contributing their full quota to the grand army of *our* republic, more than 12,000 strong, "armed and equipped," more as the exigencies of the case or the taste, and ability of the soldier allows, than according to law or "as the law directs;" and all these recruits, and even the old soldiers themselves want drilling, all need training, and the general discipline of the camp, in order to keep their armor bright. But, above all and before all, there must be unity of action, there must be harmony within the dental ranks.

Are we not all bound for the same common goal? Are not our aims one and indivisible in the great purposes of our profession? Are we not all striving for elevation and excellence as individual members of the great and growing profession, to which we belong?

Allow me to tell you what is rapidly becoming more and more evident every year, and every day, of our professional lives: The Dental Profession is now abundantly able to take care of itself. No longer are we obliged to say to the Medical, Surgical, Clerical or Legal professions—"by your leave, we will stand by your side," but, it is able now to assert itself in its own proper individuality, and to take its stand among all other learned and honorable professions, as an *equal* and a *peer* among them all.

What then, in view of these facts, and our present surroundings, are the needs of the hour, and what the demands upon us?

You are ready—no doubt—every one of you to respond with the correct and proper answer to this interrogatory; and your presence here is the proof that you have a proper appreciation of the real nature of the case.

Yes, it devolves upon and is demanded of us, that we contribute what we can to perpetuate, and still further improve the high standard of excellence, to which our profession has attained.

What then are the means most easily within our reach, and what can we do as a contribution towards the general improvement of the dental profession?

We can do much and in many ways.

We are ourselves members of this profession, and we can improve it much by improving ourselves. Any profession in any locality is estimated by the character and ability of its members. What wonder then, where there is no concert of action, no unity of feeling, no professional pride, no fraternal regard one for the other, no evidences of superiority or ability in their calling, nor in

any other direction, no reliability in their statements, amongst themselves nor with their patients and patrons, and in short, unreliable in all the relations of life, and where, on the other hand, they are conspicuous mainly for the lack of all those qualities and characteristics contemplated and aimed at in a well ordered system or code of Dental Ethics,—no wonder, I say, that, the Dental profession whose members in any locality come within the descriptive category just mentioned, should be quoted at an estimate too low to allow it a name and a place in the honorable and learned professions of the day. And really, it cannot be denied, for it comes within the scope of our own observation, that, whilst we have much to be proud of in the high stand our profession has gained, there is much cause of complaint in this respect and much to be deplored in the general apathy, and want of appreciation of the real needs in the case.

“What can we do?” We can improve the profession in Southwest Missouri and Eastern Kansas. We can improve its standing here in Columbus, in Carthage, in Springfield and at every point where the local members join their efforts with ours.

We can and *must compel* the rendition of a better and higher verdict for our profession at all these points, and all along the line of “the army of occupation.” This we can easily do, and we need have no fears but that a discriminating public will render such verdict as soon as it is deserved, and where it is perceived we ourselves are more deserving and have learned to place a higher estimate upon ourselves and our profession.

If we cannot go to Boston or New York and improve the status and standing of the fraternity there, we have it in our power here at home, where we have a location and a name, where we are surrounded by our friends, our patients, patrons and brother practitioners, here in the midst of our every day labor, whilst we are striving to alleviate pain, to restore and preserve the dental organs of our patients, to build up a business and a name for ourselves, we can do much at the same time to raise the standard of excellence in our respective localities of the profession itself.

But we can never do this, so long as we look upon each other with distrust. So long as we regard ourselves as mere mechanics, and indulge in that isolated exclusiveness characteristic of the mere competitive tradesman.

Every man who engages in the practice of a profession, is under certain obligations to every other man already a member of that profession.

No man has any right of any kind to enter another man's house, and there render himself odious to that man's family. Nor has he any right to enter any established profession, and so conduct himself as to bring reproach upon that profession.

The whole subject in its warp and woof, the pith and point of

this address, is to recommend and urge upon your attention *the necessity of taking a higher stand in our profession.* I have pointed out some of the ways and means by which we may accomplish the desired end, and chief among these is close attention to our code of Dental Ethics. Not the mere written law, by which we have agreed to be governed in our relations with one another, but that unwritten law as well, which lays hold of and regulates a good man in all the relations of life. We would have but little use for *any* written law, were we completely under the dominion of this higher—this grand and regulating rule.

The inauguration of this movement, the organization of the Southwestern Dental Society, is destined, as I think, to prove a grand adjunct among the ways and means, a prime factor for the improvement sought. You cannot do better than to give it your warmest sympathies and support.

There is but one thing I wish to add at this time. I mention it because I have myself been made to feel its full force, in my own professional career; and because I believe—though I should put it in the form of and offer it as my retiring *advice*—you will all agree with me that it is well worth your attention, and that of every one coming into our profession:

Attend closely to your calling. Let everything else alone. No man can carry on two professions at the same time, and be proficient in both. I speak from experience and I am sure I have a strong point.

In retiring from the position to which you have so kindly called me, it is meet that I give you some expression of the gratitude and high consideration of esteem I have continually entertained for you, for this confidence, thus reposed in me, and whilst I tender you my grateful acknowledgments for the same, as well as for your kind assistance in the discharge of my duties, as your presiding officer for the term now closed, and also for your forbearance with my inaccuracies therein, I will only add that I promise you, and especially my successor, the hearty support you have given me.



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